

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 11, 2015**

ATTENDANCE: Michael Marella, Co-Chair; Susan Brannelly, Co-Chair (6:41 p.m.)
Patricia Swain, Lydia Martinez, Denese Taylor-Moye;

OTHERS: Richard Weiner, Benefits Manager, Anne Kelly-Lenz, Finance
Director, Larry Osborne, Labor Relations Director, Thomas
Sherwood, OPM Director; Mr. White, Labor Relations; Neil
(Labor Relations); Mrs. Heller, Labor Relations

CALL TO ORDER

Council Member Marella called the meeting to order at 6:21 p.m. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES: JANUARY 12, 2015 (REGULAR MEETING)

**** COUNCIL MEMBER TAYLOR-MOYE MOVED THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 12, 2015**
**** COUNCIL MEMBER SWAIN SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

GENERAL DISCUSSION RE: REVIEW OF THE MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT.

Ms. Kelly-Lenz said that the Department was still on target. She is watching the Police Overtime and the tax payments.

Council Member Martinez asked if the department was watching the snow plowing. Mr. Sherwood said that a few years ago, the City has been capturing the work that is done during the storms by using new codes. Council Member Marella asked if the storms had a large impact on Police Overtime. Ms. Kelly-Lenz said that Public Facilities was the one they were monitoring, since the Police Department was managing the Police overtime carefully. Council Member Swain asked when the December figures would be released. Ms. Kelly-Lenz said that it had been sent out electronically. The CAFR is also available. It was filed on time as required by law.

Budget Update from City Department: Benefits/Labor Relations.

Council Member Marella asked about the Affordable Care Act in regards to the seasonal/part-time employees. Mr. Weiner gave the requirements for a full time seasonal employee. The employees have to work 30 hours per week to qualify for benefits. If one part-time employee files a claim for over 30 hours, the fines are quite strong.

Mr. Weiner then gave an overview of the employees who would qualify for subsidies from the exchange. In FY 2018, there will be a Cadillac tax, which would apply to most municipalities. This would impose major fines between 5 and 6 million dollars per town.

There are about 30 seasonal Bridgeport employees. Mr. Sherwood pointed out that the reason that the employees who have extensive experience in various equipment. Council Member Swain asked about the snow plowing. Mr. Sherwood said that once the employees use up their hours, the City would use outside contractors. Discussion follows.

Council Member Brannelly joined the meeting at 6:41 p.m. She assumed the chairmanship of the meeting.

Council Member Martinez asked Mr. Sherwood to present a report of a cost comparison for using an outside company vs. the use of seasonal employees. Mr. Sherwood made a note of this.

Mr. Weiner greeted everyone. He said that the benefit coverage for the City includes the BOE. However, he cautioned everyone that the claims were "immature" and informed everyone that the teachers have a high deductible. He said that right now, the City budget was on track.

Mr. Weiner then reviewed the Medicare figures, the dental claims and worker's Comp. If the pattern holds, the costs will be under budget. Mr. Sherwood then gave a brief overview of the Internal Service Fund that is used to offset major medical claims.

Mr. Osborne then presented the areas that the department would like to see increases: such as office supplies, memberships, travel reimbursements, office maintenance and binding arbitration/mediation fees. The fees for the arbitrators are taken from this. The City would pay for the City arbitrator plus half the cost of the neutral arbitrator. The opposing arbitrator also has similar costs. Discussion followed about how arbitration works and how the funds are allocated. The Labor Department now has more control over the budget and has been able to reduce the costs of outside counsel.

Council Member Brannelly had several questions about the projected costs for the coming year. Mr. Osborne said that he really could not project that far due to the variables of the potential issues and who is at the negotiating table.

Council Member Brannelly asked about paid administrative leave and how this is determined. Mr. Osborne said that some are very short and sweet, while others are long and drawn out. Labor Relations has a practice of crossing every T and dotting every I. The employees deserve the right to have a fair and just review. Mr. Osborne then gave a brief overview of the parameters of paid leave. He stressed that it was important to make sure that the information is accurate and factual.

Council Member Swain asked how many there were in the office. Mr. Osborne said that there were six employees. He said that when the staff heads up to Wethersfield, they need to make sure that their case is solid. Council Member Swain asked for an overview on what happens at the review boards or arbitrators. Mr. Osborne said that the department starts with fact finding and then makes a recommendation to the administration. If it needs to go to the Labor Board, the

case can take up to two years or more. This may involve a due process hearing. Once an employee is terminated, they are not being paid. There is always the possibility that the Labor Relations Board will require to rehire someone. Mr. White then gave a brief overview of double jeopardy and why the documentation is so critical.

Council Member Martinez asked if this would apply to the BOE. Mr. Osborne said that there was some overlap due to the union overlap. There are times when the City works with the BOE Labor Relations.

Council Member Martinez asked about leaves of absence. Mr. Osborne said that the maximum would be one year. Council Member Martinez asked about employee assistance programs. Mr. Osborne and Ms. Heller reviewed the details of these types of programs.

Council Member Swain asked about the time that the investigations take. Mr. Osborne said that the City tries to move the cases through as expeditiously as possible but once it has gone to the Labor Board, it is on the State's timetable. Council Member Swain asked about how many cases the City had per year. Ms. Heller said that there were approximately 4 or 5 cases. Most of these are middle range employees.

Council Member Martinez asked what happened to the salary of a terminated employee. Mr. Sherwood said that the money stays in the General Fund, but the Finance Department has to review it and determine whether the final judgment will be for the City. The forecasting may include calculating

Council Member Brannelly asked how the Council Members would know if there was an employee was on a paid administrative leave. Mr. Osborne explained that it was usually a confidential issue. Mr. Sherwood gave a brief overview of the differences between the City Attorney's cases and the Labor Relations' cases. Once an issue comes up in Human Relations, it becomes confidential. The City Attorney's cases are often done in the public forum. Council Member Taylor-Moye asked what happens if someone is on paid leave and the work has to be done. Mr. Sherwood said that if the position is supervisory, then another employee may receive a salary differential, but the City cannot fill that position.

Council Member Taylor-Moye asked about the timelines for cases going to Wethersfield. Mr. Osborne said that if the employee wants a "triple A" (American Arbitration Association) group, it costs top dollar and generally takes longer.

Council Member Swain asked whom Mr. Osborne reports to. Mr. Osborne said that he reports to the CAO on a regular basis. The Mayor is not involved in the cases. Discussion followed.

Council Member Brannelly thanked the staff for the information.

30-14 - Proposed Budget Modification and Budget Transfer to the FY 2014-2015 General Fund Budget: Increase Appropriations for the Board of Education and for additional transfer to various Departments to budgetary reassign and/or create new positions.

Mr. Sherwood said that there was a budget modification due to the final filings with the State. The difference with this is that it involves positions. There are numerous projects that are underway and there are some tasks that need to be re-assigned to Finance and others that need to be assigned to Human Relations. Payroll has financial functions, such as the actual depositing of the funds, cutting the check, etc. There is also a Human Relations aspect such as family benefits that would move from Finance to Human Relations.

Mr. Sherwood then listed the five regulatory positions that he would like to have funded (an engineer, a sanitarian, assistant building official, and the return of the Deputy Assistance of Civil Service, which is a contractual agreement. He also gave the Committee members the rationale for this. Council Member Brannelly said that she would like to see some evidence that the workload has increased exponentially. Discussion followed.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARELLA MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 30-14 PROPOSED BUDGET MODIFICATION AND BUDGET TRANSFER TO THE FY 2014-2015 GENERAL FUND BUDGET: INCREASE APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND FOR ADDITIONAL TRANSFER TO VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS TO BUDGETARY REASSIGN AND/OR CREATE NEW POSITIONS.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARELLA MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER TAYLOR-MOYE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services